

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

C O N F I D E N T I A L DUSSELDORF 1182

E. O. GDS

TAGS:PINT, GW

SUB:ELECTION OUTLOOK IN NORTH RHINE WESTPHALIA

1. THREE WEEKS BEFORE THE BUNDESTAG ELECTIONS, ASTUTE POLITICAL OBSERVERS IN NORTH RHINE WESTPHALIA WILL NOT RISK AN UNEQUIVOCAL PREDICTION AS TO THE OUTCOME IN THIS STATE. THE ONLY FIRM EXPRESSION OF CONFIDENCE COME FROM CDU CANDIDATES AND FUNCTIONARIES, BUT ARE DISCOUNTED AS "ZWECKOPTIMISMUS"- THE OBLIGATORY PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF BELIEF IN ONE'S OWN CAUSE.

2. HERE, AS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE FRG, THE CAMPAIGN IS BEING FOUGHT WITHOUT REAL ISSUES, REFLECTING THE FACT THAT THE MODERATE LEADERSHIP OF THE THREE PRINCIPAL PARTIES IS IN GENERAL AGREEMENT ON THE BASIC QUESTIONS OF ECONOMIC POLICY, FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENSE AND OSTPOLITIK. THERE IS LITTLE TO EXCITE THE VOTERS OR TO BRING ABOUT A MAJOR SHIFT IN VOTER PREFERENCE, AND ALL THREE COMPETING PARTIES ARE SUFFERING FROM
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WEAKENED LEADERSHIP. MINISTERPRESIDENT KUEHN HAS LOST HIS

STANDING AS UNDISPUTED LEADER OF THE SPD IN NRW AND HAS BEEN NEARLY OUT OF ACTION AS A RESULT OF A RECENT MILD HEART ATTACK AND PROSTATE OPERATION; HIS DEPUTY RIEMER (FDP) IS OUT OF ACTION DUE TO A STATE OF EXHAUSTION(THE PROVERBIAL KREISLAUFSTOERUNG) BROUGHT ON BY EXCESSIVELY RIGOROUS DIETING; ONLY THE CDU HAS ACQUIRED SOME COLOR(PERHAPS A BLACKER SHADE OF BLACK) THROUGH THE ACTIVITIES OF BIEDENKOPF WHO, OPERATING OUT OF BONN, HAD OVERSHADOWED THE COLORLESS KOEPPLER.

3. ON SEP 4 AND 5 THE THREE MAJOR PARTIES OPENED THE HOT PHASE OF THE CAMPAIGN IN NRW WITH REALLIES IN THE DENSELY POPULATED, HEAVILY INDUSTRIALIZED RUHR AREA. THE CDU, FEATURING KOHL, STRAUSS, BARZEL AND BIEDENKOPF, SUCCEEDED IN FILLING THE DORTMUND WESTFALENHALLE EVEN BEYOND ITS 15,000 PERSON RATED CAPACITY WHILE THE SPD ON THE PREVIOUS DAY IN THE SAME HALL HAD ONLY ATTRACTED 10,000 PARTICIPANTS TO HEAR SCHMIDT, WEHNER AND ARENDT. THE FDP FILLED THE MUCH SMALLER GRUGA HALLE IN ESSEN BY COMBINING A FAMILY DAY PROGRAM WITH THE ELECTION RALLY, AT WHICH GENSCHER, FRIDERICH AND MAIHOFFER PRESENTED THEMSELVES. AT ALL THREE RALLIES THE SPEAKERS SPENT MOST OF THEIR TIME PROPAGATING SLOGANS AND ATTACKING THEIR OPPONENTS PERSONALLY RRATHER THAN DISCUSSING NATIONAL ISSUES.

4. THE CDU AS THE CHALLENGER HAS MANAGED TO STIR UP CONTROVERSY WITHOUT ANY (SO FAR) CLEARLY DISCERNIBLE GAIN. THE SLOGAN OF FREEDOM ISNTEAD OF SOCIALISM APPEARS TO BE TREMENDOUSLY SATISFYING TO THE PARTY FAITHFUL, THE CONSERVATIVE CORE, AS WELL AS THE RIGHTWINGERS. IT IS NOT LIKELY TO WIN CONVERST AMONG THE SPD OR AMONG THE UNCOMMITTED MIDDLE WHO DO NOT CONSIDER THEIR FREEDOM THREATENED BY SPD/FDP COALTION POLICIES AND WHO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND SOCIALISM A LA RUSSE. BIEDENKOPF'S AGGRESSIVE CAMPAIGN AND HIS CHARGES OF TRADE UNION CRONYISM AND UNFAIR METHODS OF SOLICITING NEW MEMBERS HAS GIVEN COMFORT TO THE CONVERTED AND POSSIBLY, AS INTENDED, TO NON-UNION LABOR, BUT MAY BACKFIRE IN TWO WAYS: (1) HE WILL LOSE CREDIBILITY IF THE INJUNCTIONS ALREADY ISSUED AGAINST REPETITION OF UNPROVEN ALLEGATIONS CAN BE MADE TO STICK, AND (2) HE MAY HAVE ANGERED AN OTHERWISE APATHETIC, BUT SPD-INCLINED VOTER GROUP INTO MORE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTION PROCESS. THE IMMEDIATE EFFECT WAS TO CAUSE
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THE DGB TO DEPART FROM ITS ANNOUNCED INTENTION TO REMAIN NEUTRAL IN THE CAMPAIGN.

5. THE SPD HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN THE BENEFICIARY OF A LARGE VOTER TURN-OUT BUT HAS HAD DIFFICULTY IN MOBILIZING ITS SUPPORTERS. THE TWO DORTMUND RALLIES WERE A GOOD INDICATION OF RELATIVE PARTY LOYALTY AND INTEREST. IN THE ABSENCE OF OTHER CLEAR-CUT ISSUES A LARGE SPD TURN-OUT COULD RESULT

FROM THE FEAR THAT A CDU GOVERNMENT WOULD JEOPARDIZE THE
STRUCUNIE OF SOCIAL INSURANCE WHICH HAS HELPED INDUSTRIAL
LABOR TO WEATHER THE RECENT RECESSION AND UNEMPLOYMENT,
OR FROM THE REACTION TO AN OVERLY AGGRESSIVE BIEDENKOPF
CAMPAIGN OR FROM A POSSIBLE INTEMPERATE OUTBURST BY STRAUSS.
IF SPD LEADERS PRAY, THEY SURELY INCLUDE A PLEA THAT THE
LATTER EVENTUALITY WILL OCCUR WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.
THE LEAST THEY WILL PRAY FOR IS AN ABSENCE OF RAIN ON
ELECTION DAY.

6. TO SUM UP, WE ARE INCLINED TO AGREE WITH THOSE WHO FEEL
THAT IN NRW THE SPD MAY LOSE A LITTLE AND THE FDP SOMEWHAT MORE,
BUT THAT THE CDU WILL NOT OBTAIN A CLEAR MAJORITY.DUX

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